

A GROUP STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS

ROMANS

Righteousness Revealed:
Sermon Companion Study

Chapters 1-8

Written for

westside
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Growth groups ministry

By

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Romans:

Righteousness Revealed Sermon companion study

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This book belongs to:

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Using this study

This study is designed for use as a catalyst for small group discussion and interaction with the book of Romans. While it has been written to compliment “Romans: Righteousness Revealed” an original sermon series of Westside Christian Church. It can be used by any group to outline weekly discussion and study through the Epistle to the Romans. Each section includes a summary of the weeks verses followed by few discussion questions for personal reflection and some journaling space to make notes or write down questions to bring to the group. If you are attending westside you can even bring your booklet to take notes during the sermon!

Group times should primarily focus on the corporate reading of the word and shared discussion by group individuals who have studied and come ready to discuss that weeks material. It is recommended that other materials such as commentaries or other supporting verses be used to accurately interpret difficult sections. This is critical for assuring that we do not turn these passages into something they are not by reading into them meanings that are not truly there.



Historical Context

Audience

As the title suggests, Paul’s epistle to the Romans is intended for the church in Rome. The church in Rome during the time of Paul’s writing would have been a mix of Jewish believers who had believed in Christ, and Gentile converts including founding members from the 3000+ conversion in Jerusalem at

Romans: Righteousness Revealed Sermon companion Pentecost (Acts 2:10). However, in 49 A.D. Emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from Rome due to squabbles surrounding Christ. This meant the Roman church became completely gentile for a short time in its leadership and congregants. Now, by the time of Paul's writing 8 years later, this had been repealed and Jews had returned to Rome to find the church under new leadership. This is thought to have led to no small amount of conflict between Jew and Gentile.

Date

It is widely accepted that Romans was written around 57 A.D. during a three month stay in Greece specifically Corinth (Acts 20:2-3) and near the end of Paul's third missionary journey. Paul includes geographic details in Romans that encompasses the work of all three of his missionary ventures up to this point which help pinpoint the approximate time and location of writing.

Authorship

Romans was composed by Paul through his scribe companion. With all the personal references to his missionary journeys, it is widely accepted that Paul was the master behind the book of Romans with Tertius as his writing hand (Romans 16:22)

Purpose

The purpose of Romans has been contested with many theories each of which typically falls into one of two camps. First, that Paul was writing regarding his own circumstances. And Second that he was writing regarding the circumstances within the Roman church. Since, there are strong arguments to support both sides of this issue. It is safe to say (in my opinion) that Paul had both things in mind. There are many issues that could be prompting Paul to write and all of them share a common thread of his missionary situation. Paul's desire to define and defend the

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Gospel, address the coming Jerusalem crisis, to further his missionary reach into Spain, and unifying the Roman church all are factors that brought Paul to write out his Understanding of the Gospel. To understand what the good news of Christ means and why it is important! How it can impact your daily life and future. Even though it is likely that Paul composed these words with specific faces of people he knew, churches he had interacted with, and circumstances of his time. We now get to benefit from this amazing work of theology that has formed so much of our current church doctrines and forms of worship.

Romans chapter 1-8 Outline

- I. Letter opening (1:1-17)**
 - A. Prescript (1:1-7)
 - B. Thanksgiving & occasion: Paul and the Romans (1:8-15)
 - C. The theme of the letter (1:16-17)
- II. The heart of the gospel: Justification by faith (1:18-4:25)**
 - A. Universal reign of sin (1:18-3:20)
 - 1. Everyone is accountable to God for sin (1:18-32)
 - 2. Jews are accountable to God for sin (2:1-3:8)
 - 3. The guilt of all humanity (3:9-20)
 - B. Justification by faith (3:21-4:25)
 - 1. Justification & righteousness of God (3:21-26)
 - 2. By faith alone (3:27-4:25)
- III. Assurance of the gospel: the hope of salvation (5:1-8:39)**
 - A. The hope of glory (5:1-21)
 - B. Freedom from bondage to sin (6:1-23)
 - C. Freedom from bondage to the law (7:1-25)
 - D. Assurance of eternal life in the spirit (8:1-30)
 - E. The believer's security celebrated (8:31-39)

An Introduction

Read: Romans 1:1-17

As Paul begins his letter he starts off by introducing himself in a more elaborate fashion than any other letter in the New Testament. This is thought to be because he is writing to a church he has not visited before. The first six verses Paul spends identifying himself and his calling. Paul follows the classic form of ancient letter by offering thanks to God and advising of his intentions. Paul is diplomatic in his approach to the Roman church who he has never met, in hopes to gain their ear and a warm reception. The final two verses of this section serve to transition from the diplomatic greeting into the body of the letter and they contain what many consider to be the main theme of the book of Romans. The title of this sermon series and study “Righteousness Revealed” comes from verse 17. Keep this in mind as we continue our study together and seek to understand the righteous life God has for us laid out in the book of Romans.

Discussion Questions

1. During introductions we often give identifying factors about ourselves. These things tend to be what we view as important or relevant information to a situation. Use Paul’s introduction as inspiration and write your own introduction about yourself.

Journaling space

Man's Rejection of Righteousness

Read: Romans 1:18-32

For all of Paul's diplomacy in the first 17 verses, this section seems a little odd. How come Paul does not expand the wonderful ideas he began in 1:16-17 about God's righteousness being revealed in his saving power? According to Paul, need to understand the situation of man before we can appreciate the wonderful news that the Gospel brings. Paul will get back to the good news of God's saving power mid chapter 3, but not before thoroughly breaking down the depravity of man and the hopeless situation before us all. We must understand this situation to know why such a gospel is needed.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to understand depravity before we can truly appreciate the gospel?
2. Has understanding your own sin given you a better appreciation for the gift of Christ?
3. How can you effectively communicate this need to the world around you without sounding judgmental?

No Excuse

Read: Romans 2:01-16

Paul uses an ancient literary device to let us listen in on a one-sided conversation with a fictitious self-righteous Jew. He has already advised that ALL men are without excuse in the previous section. But now he switches his focus to show that the Jews also suppress the truth that God gave them and therefore are without excuse. In this section Paul leveled the playing field by removing any sense of superiority the Jews might have. All are under the same judgement as lawbreakers. While the Jewish mindset thought themselves superior because of hearing the law, Paul clarifies that it is obedience to the law that brings a clear conscience. None have a clear conscience before God because even the Gentiles have a law in their hearts, and they know they have broken it.

Discussion Questions

1. Are there some sins that are greater than others? How would you rate your past sins against your neighbor, coworker, that person that sits in the next row at church?
2. Have you ever let your Christianity become a badge of superiority over those of different beliefs or unbelief?
3. How can this teaching help us remain humble as we reach others for Christ?

Journaling space

Faith Inside & Out

Read: Romans 2:17-29

While in the previous section Paul did not explicitly target the Jewish mindset, he now makes it very clear who he is talking to. By leveling the field between Jew and Gentile, his hearers may have wondered about the special revelation of the Law and circumcision to Israel by God himself. Surely it gives them some advantage over the Gentiles... right? Here Paul furthers his point that the law and circumcision are of no use unless they have an impact on the heart. This echoes Jesus' teaching in Mathew 23:25

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.”

In the same way for us today, having a Jesus t shirt, bumper sticker, or being part of the right church club does not guarantee salvation.

Discussion Questions

1. Take a moment to identify and take captive any hypocritical thinking in your faith. Ask the Lord for a circumcised heart. What is Jesus saying to you in this moment?

2. Is there anything in your life that needs to be cut away or changed for you to be set apart with a circumcised heart?

God's Faithfulness & Man's Unrighteousness

Read: Romans 3:1-20

After having demolished any thoughts of superiority for the Jewish side of his audience, Paul now asks the question "What advantage is there?" to which the reader if they have been tracking the argument should think to respond "None" But Paul gives a little surprise stating there is an advantage having the very words of God. This is clarified in vs. 9 that though there is advantage, all are under sin and therefore nobody is better. Imagine you and a neighbor are stuck in a flood, God has given you a boat. You could say "God has given me a boat... so I must be better than my neighbor." And by doing so lord your gift over them. Rather God intends that we use what has been given to help others who are stranded in the flood. You who are freed from sin are no better than your neighbor that still lives under the curse. Except that God has saved you, though unrighteous, in his faithfulness.

Discussion Questions

1. Hearing a message like this should humble our hearts and remind us of the incredible gift of Jesus. Take a moment to process and write any thoughts or feelings you are having.

2. Can you think of a time when God has been faithful, even when you were wandering in unrighteousness?

Journaling space

But Now...

Read: Romans 3:21-31

Finally, we return to the good news that was touched on in chapter 1:17. But now a righteousness from God has been made known! Martin Luther claimed that this next section contains the chief point and center of not only this epistle but the whole Bible. This section contains the doctrines of God's righteousness, justification, the shifting covenant of salvation, faith, sin, redemption, grace, propitiation, forgiveness, the ingrafting of other nations and God's justice. All of these are laid out by Paul as the answer to and the welcome relief to the problem of depravity. So then as Paul asks, "where then, is boasting?" we have no other answer but to agree with his conclusion to this section in 27-31. For we are all justified by faith alone.

Discussion Questions

1. British preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones states "there are no more wonderful words in the whole of Scripture than just these two words, 'But Now.'" These words are often used to mark transitions in the bible, from before Christ to after Christ. Write your own "But now" statement below.
2. What does it mean for Christians today "to uphold the law"?
3. Pray through Romans 3:21-26 by making it personal to you this week (add I, me, to me, mine. Etc where appropriate). Journal about your experience on the next page.

The Father of Faith

Read: Romans 4:1-12

In this next section Paul pulls out the big guns by bringing Abraham into the mix. Heritage and tradition were incredibly valued in the ancient Jewish mindset. It was how you knew you were a Jew at all! Expanding on his previous argument in 3:27-31 Paul now explains that Abraham himself was justified through faith and not the law. Therefore, even Abraham had nothing to boast about. Genesis 15:6 is cited confirming that Abrahams belief was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham is then qualified to be the father of all who share that same faith, even the gentiles as spiritual descendants rather than biological descendants. For those of us who do not have a Jewish biological heritage... this is great news!

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever thought about Abraham being in your lineage of spiritual faith? What about Moses? What does it mean for you to share in such an incredible heritage of faith?
2. Compare the two examples in 4:4 and 4:5. Which of these two ways have you approached your faith experience?
3. Do you believe that faith can truly be credited as righteousness? What does that mean to you?

The Faith of Our Father

Read: Romans 4:13-25

Paul concludes his section on Abraham by introducing a new concept, that of the promise. Promise is used four times in this section and it is the first time the word is used in Romans. Paul in this section is combating traditional Jewish thought that it was through obedience that Abraham was justified and given God's promise. Paul uses the specific instance of Isaac's miraculous birth to show Abraham's faith. There was not much Abraham could do in that story... he was old, and Sarah was barren. How could obedience do anything for him? It was his faith in the promise of what God would do that was credited as righteousness. And God is faithful to this promise even today, as we wait on Christ in faith. We are co-heirs with Christ who died for our sin that we could share in his promise.

Discussion Questions

1. Waiting is hard! Have you ever felt like you are waiting on God's promise to fulfil something in your life?

2. Think back to your childhood, when mom and dad promised that new toy, or that trip to the ice cream shop. The excitement, waiting for their faithfulness. Were they true or false? Has that had an impact on how you view the promises of God?

Journaling space

Joy in Hope...And Suffering

Read: Romans 5:1-11

Beginning in Chapter 5 Paul moves now to a new topic. In the previous chapters Paul's focus was on the power of the Gospel to free people who are bound up in sin and under God's wrath in order to bring them into a right relationship with him. Now Paul shifts to assurance of that faith and the power of God in us to overcome sin. These first eleven verses serve as the first of two bookends in this next section focusing on the assurance of our faith. 8:19-39 is the other bookend that will conclude this section and the first half of our study. In this first section on assurance, Paul encourages that because of the great news of the gospel we can have Joy even in our sufferings because of the eternal hope we have in Christ. And according to Paul, this "hope does not disappoint us."

Discussion Questions

1. Where are you on the joy-o-meter? What is the reason for your current level of joy or maybe lack thereof?
2. Have you ever felt disappointment with God or his direction for your life? how have you dealt with that?
3. Does the reality of Christ's eternal gift bring you daily joy? Why or why not?

Journaling space

Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ

Read: Romans 5:12-21

Paul takes this section to logically explain how the sacrifice of Christ is adequate to redeem every man. This section is particularly difficult for those with a Christian-evolution viewpoint since it deals with the idea of original sin and death through one man. If death came through one man, how could the evolutionary process have happened with no death? But, while this is a great verse to help us understand original sin and creation, Paul's focus is on Christ and proving his ability to conquer and pay the penalty of sin. Since all who have come from Adam are under the curse of Sin and death, all who are then made new in Christ are free from that same sin and death. Law was added so that we could see how great the trespass and the chasm between us and God. Paul explains, this is so we can see the grace of God even more over the trespass. This is not merely theological information, but a proof Paul is using to assure his readers of the power and validity of the Gospel of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to you that the vastness of sin was cleansed by one man?

2. How has the gift of the one-man Jesus made a difference in your life today?

Dead To Sin...Alive In Christ

Read: Romans 6:1-14

Paul anticipates how his last point could be misinterpreted and clarifies in this section that we do not just keep sinning that grace should abound. Christ has Justified us once for all which we saw in the last section, but he also does a work in us now called sanctification. This work is to bring us into the likeness of Christ and gives us the power to overcome sin in our lives today. We are not just stuck in a sinful grace vacuum until Christ returns. We are called to be set apart unto Christ as we are now born anew through him instead of Adam. Paul puts it this way: that we were buried with him and raised to a new life. Sin is no longer our master, neither the law, Rather Christ is our master and he has given us the indwelling of his spirit to overcome bondage to sin. This does not mean we are perfect, but rather Christ is perfecting us and uprooting poisonous fruit to plant a good harvest in us.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of an area of sin that Jesus is helping you to overcome? Thank him for this sanctifying work.
2. Are there any areas in your life where you are guilty of abusing the grace of Christ? Spend a moment talking to him about it.
3. Is it possible to live a fully sanctified sinless (in Christ) life today? What would this look like in your life?

Whose My Master?!

Read: Romans 6:15-23

Paul continues his argument regarding sin but with a slightly different emphasis. This new emphasis deals with the issue of Lordship. In the last section Paul dealt with our freedom from sin and how it no longer has power over us. But, now that we have been freed from the chains of sin and death, we have a new master. Paul says we are now to be slaves to righteousness. This teaching can be difficult in our culture today. We love the talk of freedom and grace, but slaves to righteousness? Something inside us bucks against that, the old root of the flesh which is dying more and more each day we choose to submit to righteousness. This is a critical piece that cannot be missed. Your new master must be Christ. After all what is sin except that which is contrary to God. The self-willed person that is not a slave to righteousness it thus still operating under the bondage of sin and death. But Paul has informed his readers that they have died to that life and have a new one. And the benefit of this? Eternal life!

Discussion Questions

1. What feelings rise up in you when you hear that you are “slaves to righteousness”?
2. Does the Lordship of Christ take priority in your daily decision making? How can you practice this?
3. Take some time this week to pray for Christ’s lordship in the deep dark areas that continue to enslave you.

Journaling space

Christians And The Law

Read: Romans 7:1-6

The law in the book of Romans is generally a negative thing. It did not make the Israelites better off by having the law. As Paul explained earlier, just having the law does not count, rather it is obedience to the law. And if you read the old testament, you can see how many times Israel failed at this. This of course means that the law cannot justify us and in fact it just makes us aware of our sinfulness. Paul now makes the point that not only are we dead to sin, but that in dying we are freed from the mosaic law. I don't know if you have read the mosaic laws for ceremony and worship, but I am glad we are not subject to that anymore. Remember, Paul is not saying we are now free to sin as much as we want, he already clarified that in the last chapter. We are no longer bound to a written code, instead we serve Christ in a new way by his spirit. And service to him does not include blatant sinful behavior, but humble submission.

Discussion Questions

1. Does the idea that "everything is permissible" under Christ get abused by the church today? Have you seen this in your own life?
2. How does the truth of your death and subsequent resurrection to Christ affect you day to day?
3. If we are no longer bound to a written code, how do we know what is sinful or not?

The Struggle Is Real

Read: Romans 7:7-25

Paul once again reads the mind of his readers to dispel a natural question. Is the law sin? Of course we see in the text that it is not. For Paul the law is helpful for understanding what sin is. This section has been both helpful and confusing in the history of the church for understanding the struggle we have with sin. It is important to keep the context in mind here as Paul has been dealing with Mosaic law. So, when we get to 7:13-25 it is important to understand Paul's example is in relation to submission to mosaic Law, not an outline of how the Christian experience is meant to be. While we may find a similar struggle of the old flesh, we now have the power of Christ to help us overcome the sin living in us as Paul puts it. Christ is thus the answer to the question "who will rescue me from this body of death" For the man seeking to be justified by the law he is simply doomed to look upon the law and see over and over his failure to do what he wants to do (follow the law), while instead doing what he does not want to do (sinning).

Discussion Questions

1. What makes the Christian experience with sin different from the rest of the world? Is there really any difference?

2. What does it mean to you that by the power of Christ, you are no longer doomed to continue in patterns of sin?

3. give thanks to the Lord in light of the freedom he has given you.

Journaling space

The Spirit filled life

Read: Romans 8:1-17

In this next section Paul moves on to talk about our new spirit filled life and adoption as sons of God. We are no longer bound to moral duality as those under the law. Rather we have a new life and identity through the gift of Christ. To have the spirit of Christ means we can no longer live in the old sinful identity. We have been freed from that. Paul asserts that the spirit filled person no longer lives for their own selfish desires but rather desires what the spirit desires. Further than that, Paul says that the sinful mind is hostile to God and does not submit. Such a person does not have the spirit, and without this spirit you cannot belong to Christ. But what does this spirit filled life look like for us? The lives of most Christians today could not be considered devoid of mistakes or sin. Sin is still part of our Christian experience. The difference for the spirit filled life is the sanctifying process of Christ that helps us to overcome sin. And as those filled with the spirit of Christ, we are called to (by the power of Christ) put to death the misdeeds of the body. In this way we live in to our new identity as sons and daughters of the living God.

Discussion Questions

1. What does having a new identity mean for you?
2. Why does it seem so hard at times to live a spirit filled life?
3. Does Jesus really help you to put to death the misdeeds of the body? What are the evidences for this in your life?

More than conquerors

Read: Romans 8:18-39

We now come to the second bookend of this section by returning to the subject of assurance. Verses 18-30 deal with the guarantee of our future glory. Paul encourages that glory is the ultimate plan for both his people and the whole of creation. Not only that but God himself helps us in waiting for this future glory. His Spirit helps us pray and he promises to oversee everything for our good. In verses 31-39 Paul offers the crescendo and wrap up to this section which began in chapter 5. This ending is a powerful reminder that God is for us and that in him we are conquerors through the incredible guarantee of his promise. That nothing can separate us from the love of our God.

Discussion Questions

1. Is there any value in keeping a clear vision of your future glory? How often do you think about it?
2. If God promises good for those who love him... why do Christians still suffer? How should we respond to troubles? Loss?
3. How does this section strengthen and encourage your faith?

Prayers

Prayers

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Righteousness Revealed

“in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” Romans 1:18.

Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is considered to be his masterpiece. Romans is a rich letter filled with deep theology that is foundational to understanding the Christian faith. This companion study is designed to provoke thoughtful interaction with the text found in Romans in the context of a small group.

-Tom Hartung



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